THE CONCEPT OF BHAKTI

(*Professor L. Venkatarathnam Endowment Lectures,* 1969-70)

by

Sri P. THIRUGNANASAMBANDHAN

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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LECTURE I

THE CONCEPT OF BHAKTI

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The greatest heritage that we are fortunate to have got from our ancestors is the immense treasure of Philosophy, Religion and Ethics, the product of their intuition and reason. The very soul of India, the very life blood of her hoary civilization and culture is found not so much in the palaces but in temples, not in Politics but in philosophy. The quest for the Eternal amidst the Evanescent the urge to find the source of immortality while yet living in the midst of finite things were evident even in the earliest literature. Man, the highest among the creations of God, tried to establish a nexus between himself and God and to raise himself to the state of Divine and in this attempt chalked out different ways to suit the diverse types of men of varied spiritual attainment. In an atmosphere of intellectual freedom for which India has always been noted, there arose several systems of philosophy and kinds of Religion. But the true Religionist never claimed absolute truth for his own but considered every path as leading to the same goal: As the poet Kalidāsa ably put it.

Bahudhāpyāgamair bhinnāḥ panthānaḥ siddhihetavaḥ/
Tvayyeva nipatantyōghāḥ jāhnavīyā ivārṇave//

R.V.10.26.

Mallinātha commenting on this observes, 'Even though the seers have propounded different systems based on the varying Śruti texts, the object of those texts is only Thou, O God!'

'*Vibhinneṣvapi śrutivacaneṣu munimateṣu ca teṣām*
pratipādyas tvam ekaḥ'

As Sir *M. Williams* puts it, 'The very strength of Hinduism lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human character and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and

abstract side suited to the metaphysical philosopher, its practical and concrete side suited to the man of affairs and the man of the world, its aesthetic and ceremonial side suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination, its quiescent and contemplative side suited to the man of peace and love of seclusion.'

'Religion', says Hegel, 'is truth conceived in concrete, pictorial, metaphorical forms while philosophy proper is the same truth stripped of its sensuous clothing and interpreted in terms of pure thought.' Our forefathers realised that 'Philosophy without Religion is barren and Religion without Philosophy is blind,' and the result is the happy wedding of Philosophy and Religion. Man is a complex of Intellect, will and feeling. Religion as the deepest expression of our noblest ideal, must needs strengthen our moral will, must satisfy the demands of reason and at the same time must bring comfort and solace to our yearning soul. The way to find God is not solely through the avenue of reason, though reason may save us from many a pitfall; it requires ardent faith and love, *Śraddhā and Bhakti:*

Lord Tennyson says—

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing Reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart,
Stood up and answered 'I have felt'."

Bhakti like philosophy begins in wonder, a sense of awe in the presence of God's beauteous creation. The sense of awe and wonder gradually develops into emotions of admiration, gratitude and reverence. Gripped wtth a sense of wonder, the devout man views with inexpressible delight the handywork of God in Nature and is filled with adoring reverence for its mighty author on whose commands the heavens and the earth stand poised in their respective orbits;

Etasyaivākṣarasya Praśāsane
Dyāvāpṛthivyau vidhṛtau tiṣṭhataḥ.

—Brhad. Upan.

The concept of bhakti is as ancient as Rig Veda. We find passages indicative of devotional feelings. This is from Rig Veda praising Vishnu.

Yasya trī pūrṇā madhunā padāni
Akṣīyamāṇā svadhayā madantu/
Ya u tridhātu Pṛthivīm uta dyām
Eko dādhāra bhuvanāni viśvā//

(Rg. Ved. Viṣṇu Sūkta)

'Hail to Vishṇu 'Whose three steps filled with mead, unfailing, rejoice in bliss; and who, alone, in threefold wise (i.e., with three steps) has supported earth and heaven and all beings.'.

This is the nucleus of the later Purānic account of Trivikramāvatāra of Mahāviṣṇu.

The following is a prayer to Rudra in RV. ii.33.7.

Kva sya te Rudra mṛlayākur
Hasto yo asti bheṣajo jalāṣaḥ/
Apa' bhartā rapasaḥ daivyasya
Abhi nu mā vṛṣabha cakṣamīthāh//

'Where, O Rudra, is that merciful hand of thine which is healing and cooling? As remover of injury coming from the Gods, do then, O Mighty God, be compassionate towards me'.

In the age of the Upanishads when the conception of an impersonal God was the prevailing idea, we find the first beginnings of a theistic system in Śvetāśvatara Upanishad which is claimed to be earlier than Bhagavad Gītā. It here and there identifies Brahman with the God Rudra Śiva.

Bhagavad Gītā is for all practical purposes one of the important source books for the study of bhakti movement in India. It contains elements philosophyically irreconcilable with one another but it speaks to the heart of man and offers salvation to men of all castes. The Absolute of the Upanishads is here a convertible of Vishṇu and Vishṇu is identical with Śrī Krishṇa. He has given to the aspirants of release the threefold path Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti. All the three have to be coordinated to achieve the goal in a natural and smooth manner.

Bhagavad Gītā represents an intermediate stage between the Upanishadic Metaphysics and the later theistic religion of Śiva and

Viṣṇu. A syncretic approach is made here in the direction of the attainment of perfection. Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti and Yoga receive their due meed of praise.

We find the existence of Bhāgavata cult in the Pre-Christian era of Patanjali's days since reference is made by Patanjali to Śivabhāgavatas.

Jainism and Buddhism held sway both in the North and South for a considerable period in the first few centuries of the Christian era and those religionists eschewed the glow that comes from the devotion to God and moralised Religion. This drove the hungry human heart to turn to a heart warming religion. A wave of Spiritual ardour and devotion swept across the land of ours in the South during the Seventh to the Ninth Centuries. It was during this period that a good many Śaiva Nāyanmārs and Vaishnava Ālvārs gave the people the melodious songs that stirred their emotion and chastened them once again since the days of Bhagavad Gītā and Paripāḍal. Buddhism and Jainism gave the cue to the Saivite and Vaishnavite devotees to adopt the language of the masses, viz., Tamil as a vehicle for propagating the truths of their religion. Secondly, these teachings were thrown open to all classes of people. That this new movement was directed against the then prevalent atheistic religions, the Buddhism and Jainism is obvious from the derogatory reference to the followers of the religions in almost every hymn of Thirujnana-sambandha. To cite an example.

புத்தர் புன்சமணுதர் பொய்யுரைப்
பித்தர் பேசிய பேச்சை விட்டு மெய்ப்
பத்தர் சேர் கருவூருள் ஆனிலே
அத்தர் பாதம் அடைந்து வாழ்மினே.

[திருக்கருவூரானிலே, 10]

The two movements of Saivism and Vaishṇavism though oriented towards rival Gods Śiva, and Vishṇu, both make a popular religious appeal through the use of Tamil, both insisting on an exclusive devotion to one personal God emphasising on the one hand the Divine grace and on the other the privilege of man's devotions to the Supreme Godhead. In almost all the hymns whether Saivite or Vaishnavite we discern an yearing after the Divine fellowship. The hymnal literature seems to have developed spontaneously as in

the case of Vedic mantras which flowed out of spontaneous vision and experience of Vedic seers and hence came to be regarded as the 'Tamil Vedas'. Religion is concerned very much with the personality of God, whereas pure mysticism is concerned with the inward enjoyment of God in essence. The Religious mysticism of the Ālvārs and Nāyanmārs is deeply devotional. The saints are soaked in the love of the personality of God and his superhuman deeds. Wonder, awe, love and faith mingle with each other to work up an alembic of purest intensity of self-giving and seeking God for its own sake. Mr. A. L. Basham describes the hymns as among the India's greatest contributions to the world's religious literature.

Attempts have been made to define and classify Bhakti. It has been defined in various ways. Madhusūdanasarasvathī in his 'Bhakti Rasāyana' says that as a result of various religious observances, the mind becomes supple and flows like a stream into God. The state of mind thus attuned to God is bhakti—

Drutasya Bhagavaddharmāt dhārāvāhikatām gatā/

Sarveśe manaso vṛttiḥ bhaktir ityabhidhīyate//

Rūpagosvāmin in his Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu defines bhakti as assiduous thought fixed on Kṛṣṇa devoid of any worldly desire and unmixed with knowledge, action, etc. Bhakti gradually rises from a state of 'sādhana' or means on to sentiment and love. It is strange that 'bhakti' does not find a place in the scheme of Rasas dealt with in Sāhitya śāstra though it is a dominant psychological factor which has shaped the conduct and very life of millions of people, though a secondary psychological concept of the 'loathsome' sentiment finds a place. Rūpagosvāmin has rightly therefore treated 'bhakti' as a Rasa and distinguished its primary and secondary forms. The former has five aspects the 'śānta' quiet, 'prīta' affectionate, 'preyān' more affectionate, 'vatsala' fond and 'madhura' sweet in the progressive order of intensity. He has enumerated as many as 64 forms of expedient devotion as sādhana bhakti with all psychological concepts and imagery. This Bhakti Rasa or Madhura Rasa as it is otherwise called has its ālambana vibhāva, the object of adoration like Śrī Krishṇa, it's uddīpana, songs of praise, dance, etc., and the permanent emotion of Bhagavad Rati. It is thus a Paripūrṇa

Rasa and not a mere Rati bhāva, as the orthodox Indian rhetoricians hold.

Sri Rūpagosvāmī traces the development of 'Bhakti' in the case of aspirants thus :—

First arises faith; then follows attraction and after that adoration. Adoration leads to suppression of worldly desires; and the result is singlemindedness and satisfaction. Then grows attachment which results in ebullition of sentiment. After this love comes to play'.

Nārada describes devotion as 'Parama Prema' or intense love towards God which is of the nature of nectar in putting a stop to all painful and unpleasant contingencies of life and the cycle of births and deaths.

Śāṇḍilya describes devotion as the intense attachment to God 'Parānuraktiḥ Īśvare'.

Nārada poses the question 'Who crosses Māyā the darkness of Nescience, the source of this endless cycle of birth and death?' and answers, 'It is he who avoids unholy association, seeks the company of men of large hearts and become selfless, who retires to a lonely spot, roots out all worldly attachments, does not succumb to the influences of contraries such as pleasure and pain. He even puts aside the Vedas and develops an uninterrupted flow of love towards God. It does not mean that one can neglect social customs and ceremonies. On the contrary one should surely attend to their performances but surrendering all consequences to God. Self-assertion, pride, etc., should be forsaken. Among them there exist no distinctions of birth, learning, appearance, family, wealth, observance and the like, since they all belong to Him. Treatises on devotion should be studied with attention and observances laid down therein performed. They should faithfully observe non-violence, truthfulness, cleanliness of body and mind, kindness, belief in God and revelation and other excellences of character. The Lord alone should be always worshipped with the whole heart by the devotees with absolute trust in him. Being invoked thus he at once reveals himself and fills his devotees with his influence.

Each individual strives to reach the goal of liberation by diverse paths. Experience of pleasure and pain is a fundamental fact of

human existence. Men who have acquired merits in their previous birth come to feel dissatisfied and helpless in finding themselves tossed about amidst such unending alteration of pleasure and pain. Then there arises in him *Śraddhā* or belief that there is a Moral Governor of the World who regulates the destinies of souls according to the immutable laws. Gradually he ceases to perform prohibited acts and begins to perform more and more acts prescribed. Even the act that he performs he learns to do without attachment to the fruit which they may produce but in a spirit of dedication. This is the Karmayoga which ends in the purification of the mind.

The second stage begins with the adoption of certain sādhanas. *Sādhu sevā* or the worship of pious men is the first act of worship. Companionship of the sādhus will produce a transformation in one's attitude to things of the world. It is with this purpose in view we find 'Sivanaḍiyār tirukkūṭṭam' and Bhāgavata Melas and festivals are arranged. We find such congregation in the days of Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs. Next follows occasional contemplation alternated with worship. Reflection upon the Self, the Supreme, listening to and singing the names and achievements of the Lord, constancy in worship lead to 'Ruchi' or feeling of enjoyment of the life of devotion. This is followed by 'Āsakti' or attachment and consequent depth of contemplation.

Devotion though one in kind, still appears in eleven forms according as it takes the course of attachment (āsakti) to the attributes and greatness of God, etc. The attachment may be induced either by the perception of aiśvarya, of the majesty and lordliness of God or by the perception of mādhurya or the grace and beauty of God. The former is called 'guṇa māhātmya āsakti' and the latter rūpa-āsakti. These are followed by 'pūjā āsakti' or attachment to worship. In these forms of attachment the devotee is possessed with the sentiment of awe and wonder and stands as it were, at some distance from the Lord, giving expression to his insignificance and sinfulness on the one hand and the majesty and holiness of the Lord on the other. The first is contemplation of the Lord as power and the second the contemplation of the Lord as Love. The first is more or less what the western theologians understand by 'natural religion' which is an appreciation of God in the study of man and the world.

Saint Appar contemplates on the heroic feats of Śiva disclosing his infinite grace to his devotees.

தடுத்தானைக் காலனைக் காலாற் பொன்றத் தன்னடைந்த
மாணிக்கன்றருள் செய்தானை
உடுத்தானைப் புலியதளோடு அக்கும் பாம்பும் உள்குவார்
உள்ளத்தின் உள்ளான் தன்னை
மடுத்தானை அருநஞ்சம் மிடற்றுள் தங்க வானவர்கள்
கூடிய அத்தக்கன் வேள்வி
கெடுத்தானைக் கீழ் வேளூராளுங் கோவைக் கேடிலியை
நாடுமவர் கேடிலாரே.

—திருக்கீழ்வேளூர் திருத்தாண்டகம், 8.

Saint *Thirumangai Ālvār* contemplates on the cosmic feats of the Lord of Thiruvazhundur in these lines.—

முன்னிவ் வுலகேழும் இருள் மண்டி உண்ண
முனிவரொடு தானவர்கள் திகைப்ப வந்து
பன்னுகலை நால்வேதப் பொருளை யெல்லாம்
பரிமுகமாய் அருளிய எம் பரமன் காண்மின்............ ... . (2)

சினமேவும் அடல் அரியின் உருவமாகித்
திறல்மேவு மிரணியனது ஆகம் கீண்டு
மனமேவு வஞ்சனையால் வந்த பேய்ச்சி
மாள உயிர் வவ்விய எம் மாயோன் காண்மின்.............. (5)

Ādi Śankara himself a great devotee sings the majesty and the glory of Bhavānī.

Jvalatkoṭibālārkabhāsāruṇāṅgīm
Sulāvaṇyaśṛṇgāraśobhābhirāmām|
Mahāpadmakiñjalkamadhye virājat
Trikoṇe niṣaṇṇām bhaje Śrībhavānīm||

—*Bhavānī bhujangam*, 2.

St. Māṇikkavācaka in a number of places expresses his sinfulness and helplessness and implores Śiva to bestow his grace.

மறுத்தனன் யான் உன் அருள் அறியாமையிலென் மணியே!
வெறுத்து நீ என்னை விட்டிடுதி கண்டாய் வினையின் தொகுதி
ஒறுத்து எனை ஆண்டுகொள், உத்தரகோசமங்கைக்கரசே!
பொறுப்பரன்றே பெரியோர் சிறுநாய்கள்தம் பொய்யினையே.

—நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம், 6.

Saint Thirujñānasambandha refers to the devotees of Siva at Thiruppugalūr who worship Siva, by offering water, flower and food offerings and sing his glories. The Pūjā-āsakti is referred to in the line —

பூவும் நீரும் பலியுஞ் சுமந்து புகலூரரையே
நாவினாலே நவின்றேத்தல் ஓவார் செவித்துளைகளால்
யாவும் கேளார் அவன் பெருமை யல்லால் ....
—திருப்புகலூர் திருப்பதிகம், 4.

This is followed by attachment to the memories of the Lord or *Smaraṇa-āsakti*. This is what I think the poet Keśavanār tells us in Paripāḍal.

நின்னைத் துன்னித்துன்னி வழிபடுவதன் பயன்
இன்னும் இன்னும் அவை யாகுக.

There succeeds attachment in the forms of closer personal relationship of varied kinds like dāsya-āsakti, Sakhya-āsakti, vātsalya-āsakti and kāntā-āsakti. Saint Appar, Sundarar, Jñānasambandha and Māṇikkavācaka are supposed to represent these four modes of approach though it is possible for the same devotee to approach God in any of these ways as the occasion demands it.

Saint Appar displays in more than one place, *dāsya āsakti*, service at the feet of Śiva. He says,

'தில்லை யம்பலத்துக் கூத்தனுக்கு ஆட்பட்டிருப்பதன்றோ நம்தம் கூழைமையே'

'துடைக்கினும் போகேன் தொழுது வணங்கித் தூநீறணிந்துன் அடைக்கலம் கண்டாய்'

Hanumān is a typical example of dedicated service—'Dāsoham Kosalendrasya Rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ'.

Thirumangai Ālvār's deep sense of service to the Lord at Thirukkaṇṇapuram is expressed in the line.

.... உன்னை உகந்துகந்து உன்றனக்கே தொண்டானேற்கு என் செய்கின்றாய் சொல்லு, நால்வேதம் கண்டானே, கண்ணபுரத்துறை யம்மானே.

Periāzhvār displays the Vātsalya āsakti when he conceives Śrī Bālakrishna as a young child crying for the moon.

தன்முகத்துச் சுட்டி தூங்கத் தூங்கத் தவழ்ந்துபோய்
பொன்முகக் கிண்கிணி யார்ப்பப் புழுதி அளைகின்றான்.
என் மகன் கோவிந்தன் கூத்தினை இளமாமதீ
நின்முகம் கண்ணுளவாகில் நீ இங்கே நோக்கிப்போ.

—திருமொழி, முதற்பத்து, தன்முகத்து, 1.

Some desire to invoke him as a friend, what is called Sakhya-āsakti. Even in the Rig Veda we find Vasishṭha talking to Varuṇa in terms of equality so to say—'What has been that chief sin, O Varuṇa, my friend, that thou desire to slay thy praiser. Proclaim that to me. I shall, free from sin, eagerly appease thee with adoration.'

(RV-VII-86-4)

Saint Sundarar demands the eye that he lost from the Lord of Thiruvārūr.

விற்றுக் கொள்வீர் ஒற்றி அல்லேன் விரும்பி ஆட்பட்டேன்
குற்றம் ஒன்றும் செய்ததில்லை கொத்தை ஆக்கினீர்
எற்றுக் கடிகேள் என்கண் கொண்டீர், நீரே பழிப்பட்டீர்
மற்றைக் கண்தான் தாராதொழிந்தால் வாழ்ந்து போதீரே.

—திருவாரூர் திருப்பதிகம், 2.

It is not enough that man should love God but it is also necessary that God should love the yearning soul. This motif is natural to a woman in love. The divine grace has to intercede and make God love the soul that has prepared itself through 'tapas' as Pārvatī did for receiving the love of God. *Āṇḍāḻ* dreams incessantly of her Beloved and prays constantly to secure his grace. This represents the *Kāntā-āsakti*.

In Āṇḍāl Thirumozhi we find that rapture of contemplation and absorption in his beauty.

மத்தளம் கொட்ட வரிசங்கம் நின்றூத
முத்துடைத் தாம நிரைதாழ்ந்த பந்தற்கீழ்
மைத்துனன் நம்பி மதுசூதனன் வந்து என்னைக்
கைத்தலம் பற்றக் கனாக்கண்டேன் தோழீ நான்.

—திருமொழி, 6,6.

Saint *Mānikkavācakar* in his 'Thirukkovaiyār' conceives himself as a jealous mistress who will not brook her love to be shared by another and therefore apprehends with concern that he may bestow on another the same love.

செவ்வாய் துடிப்பக் கருங்கண் பிறழச் சிற்றம்பலத்தெம்
மொய்வார் சடையோன் அருளின் முயங்கி மயங்குகின்றாள்
வெவ்வாய் உயிர்ப்பொடு விம்மிக் கலுழ்ந்து புலந்து நைந்தாள்
இவ்வாறு அருள் பிறர்க்காகும் என நினைந்து இன்னகையே.

—பரத்தையிற் பிரிவு. கலவி கருதிப் புலத்தல்.

This attachment as of a wife under the sense of Love results in complete consecration of the self to the service of the Lord; this is called Ātmanivedanāsakti

Mīra Bāi forgot the world in the worship of Krishna. She sang and prayed incessantly. She surrendered herself completely and looked upon him as the only saviour. She swears, 'Even if you break, My Lord, I will not break' and poses the question 'If I break relations with you, with whom shall I connect' thus expressing her utter helplessness in the absence of reciprocity at his hands.

Saint *Māṇikkavācakar* seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord of Thirupperundurai.

பெரும் பெருமான் என் பிறவியை நீ வேரறுத்துப் பெரும்பிச்சுத்
தரும் பெருமான் சதுரப் பெருமான் என் மனத்தினுள்ளே
வரும் பெருமான் மலரோன் நெடுமால் அறியா நின்ற
அரும் பெருமான், உடையாய், அடியேனுன் அடைக்கலமே.

—அடைக்கலப்பத்து, 3.

When the devotee completely identifies himself with his will, he loses his separate existence in the wider existence of the Lord. Then he attains the state of absolute self-forgetfulness. That state is called *Tanmaya-āsakti*.

Saint Māṇikkavācakar describes that state in the verse—

இன்றெனக்கருளி யிருள் கடிந்துள்ளத் தெழுகின்ற ஞாயிறே போன்று
நின்ற நின் தன்மை நினைப்பற நினைந்தேன் நீயலாற் பிரிது மற்றின்மை
சென்று சென்றணுவாய்த் தேய்ந்து தேய்ந்தொன்றாந் திருப் பெருந்துறையுறை சிவனே,
ஒன்று நீ யல்லை யன்றி யொன்றில்லை யாருன்னை யறியகிற்பாரே.

—கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம், 7.

This is the sprouting stage of divine love. This grows into the state of *Parama viraha āsakti*, as in the case of lovers in separation. We find such love in separation in the Gopis and particularly Rādhā.

It is in a position similar to that we find the Saint Māṇikkavācakar when he laments

உரியனல்லேன் உனக்கடிமை
    யுன்னைப் பிரிந்திங் கொருபொழுதும்
தரியேனாயே னின்ன தென்
    றறியேன் சங்கரா கருணையினால்
பெரியோனொருவன் கண்டு கொளென்றுன்
    பெய்கழலடி காட்டிப்
பிரியேனென்றென் றருளிய வருளும்
    பொய்யோ வெங்கள் பெருமானே !

—எண்ணப்பதிகம், 2.

This culminates in the devotee's realisation of Divine presence in himself as well as outside him and verily lives, moves and has his being in him. This is the 'Parama-prema,' the consummation of Love, a state which can only be experienced and not described.

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa enumerates the means or sādhanas of devotion thus. Rāma addressing Śabarī says, 'The first means is the company of the good; (2) conversation about my achievements (3) recital of my virtues (4) expounding my words (5) constant and sincere worship of the preceptor thinking that I am he (6) virtuousness, self-restraint, attachment to my worship etc. (7) reciting of mantras etc. (8) adoration of my bhaktas, awareness of Divine immanence in everything, indifference to external things and (9) consideration of the essence of God. This is the ninefold devotion open to all by adopting which even a woman of inferior creation like Śabarī was able to attain salvation.

Nārada in his Bhaktisūtras sets forth the conditions under which the spark of devotion may irradiate the entire inner and outer life of an individual.

Thus devotion arises from the giving up of the objects of the senses and of attachment to them, from unflinching adoration of God, from listening to and singing the virtues and attributes of the God head. This is obtained principally by the grace of the great

ones or from the touch of divine compassion. Companionship of the great, though difficult to obtain, can yet be got by the God's grace for there is no difference between God and His men. Evil company should be eschewed by all means as it is the cause of lust, anger, infatuation, lapse of memory, loss of understanding and ultimate total ruin.

Nārada lays down the moral code to be observed by the devotees. They should carefully observe harmlessness, truthfulness, cleanliness of body and mind, kindness, faith in God and revelation and other excellences of character.

Bhakti is *classified* variously by various texts each adopting certain criteria of its own. *Bhāgavata* for instance refers to four kinds of bhakti (1) Tāmasa, devotion to God actuated by violence, hypocrisy or malice (2) Rājasa, motivated by fame, sensual enjoyment, acquisition of power etc. (3) Sāttvika, which arises out of a sense of duty leading to destruction of karma and (4) Nirupādhika, unmotivated and aroused by the sole urge to realise the glory of God.

According to *Śivapurāṇa* the highest state of devotion is the realisation of God's presence in everything, the second is meditation and contemplation, the third is the worship of symbols which are reminders of the supreme, fourth is the performance of ritual and pilgrimage to sacred places.

Bṛahannāradīyapurāṇa refers to 3 kinds of bhakti, 'Tāmasa, Rājasa and Sāttvika each having three subvarieties, viz., low, middle and high in the ascending order (1) One who worships Hari to bring about ruin on others and with a view to dupe him follows the *Tāmasādhama* bhakti, (2) One who worships the Lord as self-willed wife trying to dominate her husband is of the *Tāmasamadhyamā* type, (3) One who, jealous of others worshipping Gods, tries to excel them follows *Tāmasottama* type of bhakti.

Worship of God for securing material gain is of the type called *Rājasādhama*. We have plenty of illustrations in Purāṇas of Asuras securing suzerainty over worlds as a fruit of their devotion but such blessings always proved not an unmixed blessing but bring in its train ultimate ruin. There are people who seek fame if not material wealth. Such a desire is marked by egoism and such a 'bhakti'

being a little higher than the prayer for material wealth is termed *Rājasamadhyama*. To seek prosperity in the world of Gods to enjoy the 'bhogas' therein is of a higher order. Yet it is indicative of the hunger for joy and does not reveal a state of equipoise, the 'Nirdvandva.' So it is described as *Rājasottama*. A man who worships God devoutly to expiate his sin achieves a negative good. It is not however marked by greed or lust. There is no sense of egoism involved in this type of devotion. It is therefore of the *Sāttvikādhama* type. Worship of God by striving to remove the distress of people or helping them in other ways is considered to be of the *Sāttvikamadhyamā* type. Worship of God in utter humility as a 'dāsa' doing his 'kaiṅkarya' is according to the Brahannāradīya purāṇa *Sāttvikottama* type of 'bhakti.'

The exponents of 'bhakti' have made a subtle analysis of all such emotional expressions flowing from loving faith in and communion with God and have dwelt at length on the methods of training the mind by a proper nurture of its finer susceptibilities into devotional moods.

The *Bhāgavata* enumerates the several methods as outlined by Prahlāda.

Śravaṇam, Kīrtanam, Viṣṇoh, Smaraṇam, Pādasevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dāsyam, Sakhyamātmanivedanam.

(VII, 5, 22-23)

1. *Śravaṇam* is listening to the glories of God with an understanding heart. Parīkshit adopted this method.

2. *Kīrtanam* praising or chanting the glory of God is the popular method adopted by the Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs, Tulasi Dās, Mīrābai, Chaitanya and a host of others. It is surely one of the means of 'Mukti'.

'பத்தியால் நினைந்து பரவுவார் தமக்குப் பரகதி கொடுத்தருள் செய்யும் முத்தன்'

3. *Smaraṇam* is constant reflection on His glory with no other fruit than to ever think of him and to love him. Prahlāda is cited as

an example. His only plea to Mahāvishṇu was that the thought of him may never cease in his mind.

'Śivasmaraṇam (Repeated remembrance of Siva)' says Ādi Śankara ' are the arrows which destroy the internal foes of man, viz., the sinful qualities of kāma, krodha, lobha, mada, moha and mātsarya. These arrows are discharged from the bowstring of bhakti by bending the bow of bhāva. When these evil forces are destroyed he becomes a true knower of truth and rules over the kingdom of bliss.'—Sivānandalaharī, 71.

4. Pādasevanam is to resort to the feet of God. This is what Saint Māṇikkavācakar refers to in the line—

'அவனருளால் அவன் தாள் வணங்கி'.

The author of Thirukkural refers to this as நற்றாள் தொழுதல் in the couplet laying down the fruit of learning.

கற்றதனால் ஆயபயன் என்கொல்—வாலறிவன்
நற்றாள் தொழாரெனின்.

—கடவுள் வாழ்த்து, 2

Saint Māṇikkavacakar exhorts men to offer their obeisance to the feet of Śiva, the abode of Eternal bliss according to Śaiva Siddhānta, under the pretext of advising the bee.

பொய்யாய செல்வத்தே புக்கு அழுந்தி நாடோறும்
மெய்யாக் கருதிக் கிடந்தேனை ஆட்கொண்ட
ஐயா, என் ஆருயிரே, அம்பலவா என்னை அவன்றன்
செய்யார் மலரடிக்கே சென்றூதாய் கோத்தும்பி.

—திருக்கோத்தும்பி, 17

Men of the contemplative kind can worship the feet of God in the inner sanctum of one's own mind. In the case of a yogi contemplating on the indwelling God, his body itself is the temple and his mind the lamp, feelings of devotion constitute the ghee and his own self the wick. There burns the flame of knowledge with the help of which the feet of God can be seen. This is what saint Appar says:

உடம்பெனும் மனையகத்துள் உள்ளமே தகளியாக
மடம் படும் உணர் நெய்யட்டி உயிரெனும் திரி மயக்கி
இடம்படு ஞானத்தீயால் எரிகொள இருந்து நோக்கில்
கடம்பமர் காளை தாதை கழலடி காணலாமே.

—தனித்திருநேரிசை, 2

Arcanam is the worship of God by offering him fruits and flowers and chanting his name. Saint Thirunāvukkarasar exhorts people to go to temple and worship him if they seek communion with God, in

'திருவாரூர்த் திருத்தாண்டகம், 9.

நிலைபெறுமாறு எண்ணுதியேல் நெஞ்சே நீ வா
நித்தலும் எம்பிரானுடைய கோவில் புக்குப்
புலர்வதன் முன் அலகிட்டு மெழுக்குமிட்டுப்
பூமாலை புனைந்தேத்திப் புகழ்ந்து பாடித்
தலையாரக் கும்பிட்டுக் கூத்தும் ஆடிச்
சங்கரா சய போற்றி போற்றி என்னும்
அலைபுனல் சேர் செஞ்சடை எம் ஆதீ என்னும்
ஆரூரா என்றென்றே அலறு நில்லே.

Vandanam is to offer obeisance to God as Ādi Śankara does:

Namaḥ Śivābhyām atisundarābhyām
Atyantamāsaktahṛdambujābhyām/
Aśeṣalokaikahitankarābhyām
Namo Namaḥ Śankarapārvatībhyām//

—*Umāmaheśvarastotram,* 6.

'This sort of Vandanam' says Poygai Ālvār, enables a man to be free from Karma, the 'nalvinai' and 'Tīvinai', will prevent the soul from going to hell or other evil ways. Therefore chant the thousand names of Śri Krishṇa.

வினையால் அடர்ப்படார் வெந்நரகில் சேரார்
தினையேனும் தீக்கதிக்கட் செல்லார்—நினைதற்கரியானைச்
சேயானை ஆயிரம் பேர்ச் செங்கட் கரியானைக்
கைதொழுதக்கால்.

'Dāsyam' is service at the feet of God. 'Sakhyam' is friendship with God. *Ātmanivedanam* is self-surrender. These have been dealt with earlier. These different ways of devotion are to be taken as illustrative and not exhaustive. Myriad are the ways of approach to the Godhead depending on the spiritual maturity of the individual soul.

There are different *types of bhaktas*. In the Epics and Purāṇas we find reference to Parīkshit who realises his 'bhakti' when he

listens to the sacred recital of the glories of God, to Śuka who recites his glories, to Dhruva who finds him in his heart, to Hanumān who renders service to Śrī Rāma, to Arjuna who looks upon Śrī Krishṇa as his constant friend, to Bali who places his self and all at the disposal of the Vāmana.

The *Gītā* refers to four types of bhaktas, namely, ārta, jijñāsu, aiśvaryārthin and jñānin or the man in affliction, the man who seeks material goods and the wise man and assigns the highest rank to the jñāni who seeks God in everything including his own self and who is sought by God as His very life.

People establish contact with God in diverse ways. The Gopis looked upon Sri Krishṇa with *love;* Kamsa always thought of him but out of *fear*; Śiśupāla was thinking of him constantly out of *hatred;* the Vṛṣṇis in the Gokula looked upon him for guidance as *followers* whereas his bhaktas look up to him with a sense of *devotion.* We have the story of a Buddhist who meticulously observed the vow of throwing stones at God Śiva at Tiruppanandāl before taking food every day and he was the recipient of Śiva's grace and came to be canonised as one of the Nāyanmārs, the Śākya Nāyanār.

What is the *nature of a true bhakta?* The characteristics of a true bhakta are given in works like Bhagavadgītā and Bhāgavata and also in the accounts given of them in such biographies as Periapurāṇam and they also stand revealed in their own utterances in Devāram, Divyaprabandham, stotras, etc.

A true devotee will see God in every one of his creation and see everything in him. Such a devotee alone can reach him easily. Bhagavān tells this to Arjuna :

> Purusaḥ sa paraḥ Pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tu ananyayā/
> Yasyāntahsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idam tatam//
>
> Bh. Gītā. 8.22.

For a man of that Universal outlook and larger vision there is no friend or foe. They are intent upon the welfare of all beings and lead a life of self-control. They are in the words of the Gītā, 'Yatamānaḥ and 'Sarvabhūtahite rataḥ'.

This ideal is echoed by a poet in '*Paripāḍal*'

பகைவர் இவர் இவர் நட்டோர் என்னும்
பகையும் உண்டோ நின் மரபு அறிவோர்க்கே.

He sees God in everything and everywhere:

தீயினுள் தெறல் நீ, பூவினுள் நாற்றம் நீ
கல்லினுள் மணியு நீ, சொல்லினுள் வாய்மை நீ
அறத்தினுள் அன்பு நீ, மறத்தினுள் மைந்து நீ
வேதத்து மறை நீ, பூதத்து முதலு நீ
வெஞ்சுடர் ஒளியு நீ, திங்களுள் அளியு நீ
அனைத்தும் நீ, அனைத்தினுட் பொருளும் நீ.

—கடுவன் இளவெயினனார்

The triumph of devotion of the individual soul to the Supreme Godhead is such that it takes no heed of birth or sex or age or culture. Says Bhagavān in the Gītā:

Mām hi Partha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ/
Striyas śūdrās tathā vaiśyāḥ te'pi yānti parām gatim // (9.32)

A perusal of the list of Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs will reveal the truth of this statement. There are monarch and brahmin, potter and cowherd, and the so-called outcastes, men and women, young and old and all attained the blissful feet of Lord. Chēramān perumāl and Kulaśekhara, Thirunāḷaippovār and Thiruppāṇālvār, saints Jñānasambandhar and Appar, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār and Āṇḍāl, Thirunīlakaṇṭhar and Iyaṟpakaiyār, to mention a few testify to the truth of the above statement. What is required is devotion coupled with faith. Thonḍaraḍippoḍi Ālvār puts it beautifully in the verse—

பழுதிலா ஒழுகலாற்றுப் பலசதுப் பேதிமார்கள்
இழிகுலத்தவர்களேனும் எம்மடியார்களாகில்
தொழுமினீர் கொடுமின் கொள்மின் என்று நின்னோடுமொக்க
வழிபட அருளினாய் போல் மதிள் திருவரங்கத்தானே.

It is no wonder that Ādi Śaṅkara praises Saint Kaṇṇappar as a jewel among the devotees.

The utter sense of devotion shown by Kaṇṇappar, the spirit in which he approached the divine, the ring of sincerity of his action so

transformed everything of him into something divine. The sandal used by the hunter looked in the eyes of God as the sacred 'kūrca' placed on his head, the mouthful of water becomes the holy water consecrated by mantras for bathing him, and the morsel of flesh serves as the sacred offering to Śiva.

Mārgāvartitapādukā Paśupaterangasya kūrcāyate
Gaṇḍūṣāmbuniṣecanam Puraripor divyābhiṣekāyate/
Kiñcitbhakṣitamāmsaśeṣakabalam navyopahārāyate
Bhaktaḥ him na karotyaho vanacaro bhaktāvatamsāyate//

Śivānandalaharī, 63.

Indeed it is not the material offered that matters but the spirit behind it that is watched and appreciated by God. Worship offered with ostentation smacks of the vainglorious nature of the person. That is the reason why Bhagavān says 'He who offers to me with devetion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept from the striving self, offered as it is with devotion.' Bh. Gītā (9.26).

'Even if the most sinful worship me, with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he has rightly resolved,' says Bhagavān in Bh. Gītā (X. 30) for as he himself lays down the guideline—'Ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham'—'They verily who worship me with devotion are in me and I also in them.' Bh. Gītā (9.29).

'Devotion expressed through *image* worship is a sort of aesthetic approach to God. Although the whole Universe is God's body animated as it is by him, yet the idol is treated as his special manifestation and hence comes to be adored. In the same way as the physical body of man or woman or child is the object of adoration not because it is a body but because it represents the indwelling soul so the image of God is worshipped. The South Indian mystic is very much aware of the iconic presence of God in the temples. For him the icon is a real and communicating presence of God and not merely a 'linga' or pratīka of God. We have seen in the lives of Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs, the God in the temple answering their prayers as vouchsafed in their songs on more than one occasion. Thiruppāṇāḻvār at Śrīrangam and Nandanār at Chidambaram prayed from a distance Lord Ranganātha and Śrī Natarāja respectively and the God in the temple in both the places bid the brahmin worshippers to bring them to their

immediate presence and they were accordingly taken. Both beheld the auspicious form of God in the temple till then inaccessible to them. It was the God in the temple at Thirukkolakkā that gave 'tālam' to saint Jñānasambandha and the God at Thiruvārūr that gave material wealth to St. Sundarar. The experience of God that the devotees had in and through the icons they worshipped points to the fact that this kind of worship has sanctity and reality. Macaulay in his 'Essay on Milton says, 'Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds.'

The 'arcā' is a symbol to remind men of the supreme spirit that God is. It does not exhaust God. Temples are built on hill tops and river banks to remind men of God and to get communion with God.

But the mere formal worship of idols by a man who has no concern for the welfare of beings which are the seat of God is worthless. It is like pouring oblation in the ash instead of in consecrated fire. This fact is clearly set forth in Śrīmad *Bhāgavata* in the verse—

Yo mām sarveṣu bhūteṣu Santamātmānam Īśvaram/
Hitvārcān bhajate mauḍhyāt bhasmanyeva juhoti saḥ//

In *Mathew Arnold,* we find an echo of this idea. 'Religion is the foundation of morality. Love of God and love of the whole creation are the two cardinal doctrines of the two allied things, religion and morality. The lives of Saint Jñānasambandhar and Appar who appealed to the God at Thiruvīzhimizhalai and got monetary aid from him to relieve the local populace of hunger and starvation speaks to the saints' concern for social welfare.

It is bhakti which gives the underdog that heart to face and brave the cruel rigours of fate shielded and protected by that powerful armament of soft love.

That stout heart we find in saint Appar who exclaims—

நாமார்க்கும் குடியல்லோம் நமனையஞ்சோம்
நரகத்திலிடர்ப்படோம் நடலையில்லோம்
ஏமாப்போம் பிணியறியோம் பணிவோமல்லோம்
இன்பமே எந்நாளும் துன்பமில்லை

தாமார்க்கும் குடியல்லாத் தன்மையான
சங்கரன் நற் சங்க வெண்குழையோர்
காதிற் கோமாற்கே நாமென்றும் மீளா ஆளாய்க்
கொய்ம்மலர்ச் சேவடி யிணையே குறுகினோமே.

—மறுமாற்றத் திருத்தாண்டகம், 1.

A sādhaka is faced with setbacks in his chosen path of devotion on occasions when he feels dejected but always looks forward on such occasions optimistically to the goodwill of that reservoir of love, the God. His pleadings do not fail and he finds the object of his adoration descending on his 'hṛtpuṇḍarīka', the temple where God himself longs to dwell, the secret meeting place of the soul of man and the soul of the Universe. Saint Māṇikkavācakar typifies the helpless yearning soul groping in the dark finally getting a glimpse of the Divine in him and clinging to him experiencing a sense of exaltation and exultation.

Saint Sekkizhār, the great biographer of Tamil Śaiva saints gives a graphic picture of the devotees. The devotees when they see kindred souls feel exulted, speak endearingly with them, be always by their side like a calf by the side of a cow exhibiting humility and sweetness.

They worship the devotees of Śiva with intense devotion. If there is anything which they can do in the service of God with the body given by him they will do it with all their heart in a spirit of dedication at the feet of the Lord.

They are eager to listen to the divine stories of Lord Śiva on account of their humble devotion, a devotion which they take care never to gain publicity (அயல் அறியா அன்பு).

They ever offer their obeisance to Śiva, filled with joy talk incoherently, shed tears of joy, horripilate and feel a tremor in their body.

The devotees of profound qualities whether they sit or stand, lie down or walk, eat or sleep, whether they wink or keep awake, they forget not the foot of the Lord of the Dancing hall. Here are

Sekkizhār's inimitable lines :

ஈசருக்கே அன்பானார் யாவரையும் தாங்கண்டால்
கூசி மிகக் குதுகுதுத்துக் கொண்டாடி மன மகிழ்வுற்று
ஆசையினால் ஆவின்பின் கன்றணைந்தாற் போலணைந்து
பேசுவன பணிந்த மொழி இனியனவே பேசுவார்.

அங்கணனை அடியாரை ஆராத காதலினால்
பொங்கிவரும் உவகையுடன் தாம் விரும்பிப் பூசிப்பார்............

யாதானும் இவ்வுடம்பாற் செய்வினைகள் ஏறுயர்த்தார்
பாதாரவிந்தத்தின் பாலாக எனும் பரிவால்
காதார் வெண்குழையவர்க்காம் பணிசெய்வார் கருக்குழியில்
போதார்கள் ; அவர் புகழ்க்குப் புவனமெலாம் போதாவால்.

சங்கரனைச் சார்ந்த கதை தான் கேட்கும் தன்மையராய்
அங்கணனை மிக விரும்பி அயலறியா அன்பினால்
கங்கைநதி மதி இதழி காதலிக்குந் திருமுடியார்
செங்கமல மலர்ப்பாதஞ் சேர் வதனக்குரியார்கள்.

ஈசனையே பணிந்துருகி இன்பமிகக் களிப்பெய்திப்
பேசினவாய் தழுதழுப்பக் கண்ணீரின் பெருந்தாரை
மாசிலா நீறழித்து அங்கு அருவிதர மயிர் சிலிர்ப்பக்
கூசியே உடல் கம்பித் திடுவார், மெய்க்குணமிக்கார்.

நின்றாலும் இருந்தாலும் கிடந்தாலும் நடந்தாலும்
மென்றாலும் துயின்றாலும் விழித்தாலும் இமைத்தாலும்
மன்றுடும் மலர்ப்பாதம் ஒருகாலும் மறவாமை
குன்றாத உணர்வுடையார் தொண்டராம் குணமிக்கார்.

—பத்தராய்ப்பணிவார் புராணம்

LECTURE II.

THE PLACE OF BHAKTI IN THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY.

(16th October, 1970)

The way of knowledge, Jñāna mārga, as prescribed in the Upaniṣads, is recognised as effective, but it is obviously limited to the few. The way of work, Karma mārga is recognised, and if prescribed duties are done without attachment to the fruits of action, release can be obtained. As effective as either of them is the way of devotion, *Bhakti* mārga. Yet another mārga is the *Prapatti* mārga, the way of self-surrender to the will of God. The way of meditation or Dhyāna is another mārga. All these are equally good sādhanas for the different types of sādhakas for whom they are intended. This is said in the Gita XIII 25, 26. 'Some by meditation behold the self in the self by the self; others by the Jñāna yoga; and others by the yoga of action. Others also ignorant of this having heard of it from others, worship; and these also cross beyond death, adhering to what they had heard'.

As Sir S. Rādhākrishṇan puts it 'we may reach the end through devotion, meritorious action and intellectual contemplation. These are not exclusive; they interpenetrate.'

Action without attachment goes hand in hand with pure knowledge and pure devotion. How can one surrender the fruits of action to God, if he does not know and love God? To attempt to say that Karmayogi attains mukti only by passing through Bhaktiyoga or jñānayoga is an overstatement. For has not Bhagavān said in the Gītā 'Asakto hyācaran karma param āpnoti pūruṣah. By performing action without attachment, man verily reaches the Supreme'. Janaka and others indeed attained to perfection by action. Śrī Kṛṣṇa cites himself as an example. 'I mingle in action' he says. If one merely worships God but fails to do his karma he is not the beloved of God.

No doubt Śrī Kṛṣṇa exalts here and there each of the yogas. He urges Arjuna in Ch. VI. 46. 'The Yogi is greater than the ascetic; he is greater than even the wise; the Yogi is greater than the man of action; therefore become thou a Yogi, O Arjuna'.

And yet Bhakti yoga is exalted in Ch. XI of the Gita—'By devotion to me alone I may thus be perceived and known and seen in essence and entered, O Arjuna.' (54)

Elsewhere in Ch. IV, 33 he proclaims 'All action in their entirety, O Pārtha, culminate in wisdom.' All these only show that each 'sādhana' is capable of leading the aspirants to the highest goal.

The way of devotion is accessible to the poor and the illiterate, to the high and the low. Devotion to God implies submission to his will. Instinctive love is love with a totality of self-surrender to the God, the life of the Universe. This path of 'Prapatti' is a type of bhakti but of a distinct kind that it is sometimes distinguished from bhakti by the Sri Vaishṇavas. Bhakti involves meditation as jñāna does. In bhakti the meditation is characterised by the soul's feeling of love for and dependence on God. To follow the path of bhakti according to Rāmānuja qualifications based on birth, etc., are considered necessary, whereas Prapatti is open to all.

Prapatti shows the mood of utter helplessness and fear of obstructions caused by Māyā and its products, on the part of the devotee. This is indicated in the Gītā 'This divine illusion of mine (i.e., Māyā) caused by the triple qualities is hard to overcome; they who come to me cross over this illusion (Māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetām taranti te) VI. 14. Bhagavān assures liberation to the 'prapanna' out of his infinite grace.

'Abandoning all duties come unto me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate from all sins" assures Śri Kṛṣṇa in Gītā XVIII 66.

'Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja/
Aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ//'

In Prapatti we find the harmonious engagement of the head, the heart and the hand, the consecration of all our faculties to the ideal of service for its own sake. Here is a combination of mystic contemplation and active service for fellowmen. In Āṇḍal we find that total surrender to God, the spirit of dedicated service with a

view to gain that Spiritual union with the Divine not only for herself but for all souls seeking spiritual union through love. She resolves—

> எற்றைக்கும் ஏழேழ் பிறவிக்கும் உன்தன்னோடு
> உற்றோமேயாவோம் உனக்கே நாம் ஆட்செய்வோம்
> மற்றை நம் காமங்கள் மாற்றேலோர் எம்பாவாய்.
>
> —திருப்பாவை, 29

Saint Māṇikkavācakar expresses his meekness and surrenders everything unto him trusting in his grace.

The assurance given by Śrī Krishṇa to Arjuna in the Gītā is an assurance given/ by the Supreme God head to the aspiring devotee. It is binding on Śiva too, another name for the Supreme God head. St. Māṇikkavācakar appears to remind Śiva of that solemn assurance and implores.

> அன்றே என்றன் ஆவியும் உடலும் உடைமை எல்லாமும்
> குன்றே அனையாய் என்னையாட் கொண்ட போதே
> கொண்டிலையோ......
> நன்றே செய்வாய் பிழைசெய்வாய் நானோ இதற்கு நாயகமே.
>
> [குழைத்தபத்து, 7]

The scheme of 'Prapatti' has six parts known as 'ānukūlya saṇkalpa', 'prātikūlya varjana', 'Mahāviśvāsa', 'Kārpaṇya', 'goptṛtva varaṇa' and 'ātmanikṣepa'. The first furnishes the psychological motive to follow the Divine will. Here the human will is bereft of egoism and attuned to the redemptive purpose of God. It also connotes the human will to serve the creatures of God. The second is renunciation of what is repugnant to God. The third is the supreme confidence in God, the redeemer. The fourth stands for utter humility and incapacity to follow the prescribed deeds. The fifth is the act of making a plea to God's mercy for protection. The sixth consists in the self-offering being fully conscious of the fact of its being a gift of God's grace.

Prapatti involves 'phala samarpaṇa, bhara samarpaṇa and svarūpa samarpaṇa' or the renunciation of the hedonistic, the moralistic and the egoistic views of life.

Vibhīṣaṇa resolves to quit Rāvaṇa's camp, renounces all his possessions and flies from Lankā, reaches the feet of Rāma full of faith in the righteousness of Rāma and in humility seeks his protection and surrenders to him, the Lord who gives succour and safety to the whole world.

Śankara maintains that it is knowledge alone which is the means of mokṣa, nay, the highest knowledge is mokṣa itself. The fruits of meritorious or sinful actions are happiness and misery respectively; but the only fruit of the knowledge of Ātman is mokṣa itself. Action and devotion may be useful indirectly, in preparing the ground for the dawn of knowledge by way of purifying the mind; but they are not direct means of mokṣa. An illusion of rope-snake cannot be removed by action or devotion but only by correct knowledge, similarly it is not possible to overcome the cosmic illusion, which is the same thing as self-realisation, by action or devotion.

Sri Sankara says in his Vivekacūḍāmaṇi—

Na yogena na sāṅkhyena karmaṇā no na vidyayā/
Brahmātmaikatvayogena mokṣaḥ siddhyati nānyathā//

(5.58)

'Liberation cannot be achieved except by the direct perception of the identity of the individual with the Universal self; neither by yoga, nor by Sānkhya nor by the practice of religious ceremonies nor by mere learning.'

Even the acquisition of knowledge is not directed to secure Omniscience. It is not an end in itself, but a means to the end which transcends knowledge and arrives at Being or Reality. Knowledge does not produce anything *de novo*. It only removes ignorance and the ātman realises that it is non-different from Brahman.

Śankara also provides for the religious minded people. To him Īśvara is the highest appearance of Nirguṇa Brahman, to whom devotion can be paid. The devotee, the worship and Īśvara, the lower Brahman, all this is real only from the Vyāvahārika or empirical point of view. It is real only so long as we are under the power of Māyā. When the ignorance is removed, it is realised that everything experienced so far, including morality, religion, Iśvara and the soul's relationship with him was like a dream dreamt the previous night. Sri Śankara in his Śivānandalaharī describes devotion that culminates in true knowledge in metaphorical language. He compares devotion to a creeper.

'At the advent of the Spring season of contemplation on Śiva the garden of my heart wears a fresh look. The dry leaves of sins drop; the creeper of devotion puts on a sprightly countenance; sprouts of holy merit make their appearance; buds of virtues glow; flowers of psalms and prayers bloom; the sweet and pleasant fragrance of the honey of knowledge-bliss-nectar wafts; the fruit of knowledge exalts the man.'

Śambhudhyānavasantasangini hṛdārāme'dya jīrṇacchadāḥ
Srastā bhaktilatācchaṭā vilasitāḥ paṇyapravāḷāśritāh/
Dīpyante guṇakorakāḥ japavacaḥ puṣpāṇi sadvāsanā
Jñānānandasudhāmarandalaharī samvitphalābhyunnatih// (47)

Śankara does not ask anyone to abandon action and devotion to a personal God. They help in purifying the mind. It is only after the purification of mind that knowledge can dawn, even as our face can be seen only in a clean mirror. The stages of action and devotion are indispensable for the attainment of knowledge, even as one has to cross the childhood and boyhood to attain manhood. Moral discipline makes for spiritual insight. Śankara's writings which include a good number of stotras addressed to different deities is a sufficient refutation of the view that according to him, the aspirant for liberation or the liberated should abandon action and devotion. In fact he says in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi. 'The sayings of the scriptures points out that Śraddhā Bhakti, dhyāna and yoga are the causes which bring about emancipation. Whoever abides by these attains emancipation from the bondage of incarnated existence.'

We are called upon to act in a disinterested way free from egoism and not to suppress human desire and freeze the human spirit. According to him devotion to Īśvara is only the devotion offered to one's own higher form. He defines 'bhakti as 'svasvarūpānusandhānam' 'the contemplation of one's own real nature'. He believes that devotion is more helpful than anything else in the realisation of liberation. He says in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 'Mokṣakaraṇasāmagryām bhaktireva garīyasī'.

This 'bhakti' he likens to a cow which has to be tethered to a post so that she might not trespass into some other ground and come to grief. That post is the lotuslike feet of God. If the cow of devotion strays away from that post and begins to yearn for ephemeral pleasures it will lead to endless birth and death. So he prays to Lord Paśupati to protect the Bhaktidhenu which unlike Kāmadhenu yields whenever we resort to it immense nectar of bliss.

(Śivānandalaharī 68).

cf. பிறவிப்பெருங்கடல் நீந்துவர் நீந்தார்
இறைவன் அடி சேராதார்

—திருக்குறள், கடவுள் வாழ்த்து, 10

On the question of God assuming different forms as Śiva and Viṣṇu have done on several occasions, Śankara says that it is done purely out of his concern for the sādhakas. The forms assumed are not to be confused with Reality—'Syāt Parameśvarasyāpi icchāvaśāt māyāmayam rūpam sādhakānugrahārtham.'

According to Śrīkaṇṭha, the exponent of the Śivādvaita school, the relation between God and soul is analogous to that of the soul to the body, what is described as Śarīraśarīri-bhāva by Rāmānuja. The soul's enjoyment and sorrow are due to his beginningless finitude and dependence. This state however can be brought to an end. The means for this is meditation necessarily preceded by correct knowledge. Release can be obtained only by the contemplation of Him, who is eternally free from bonds, Śiva the consort of Umā. He is to be realised by 'samrādhana,' by knowledge in the form of meditation. The Highest Brahman with his sixfold qualities Sarvajñatā, tṛpti etc. should be thought of constantly in order to realise his nature. He should be meditated upon in forms like this – 'O Thou who drives away the sorrows of samsāra, O giver of happiness, from Thy Joy-giving nature manifest to us that form of Thine which is auspicious, pleases all hearts and is manifest to those who have destroyed all good and evil deeds in the fire of knowledge (Svet. up. III, 5). In contemplating on the Blissful Śiva one is enjoined to meditate, 'I am Thou, Thou art I' 'Sivoham'. Here he differs from the Viśiṣṭādvaita view where the Lord is to be contemplated as the Self of selves.

The devotees of the Lord are favoured with divine illumination at the time of departure, for they have worshipped him by the performance of work enjoined, dedicating all fruits of action to him and been filled with the nectar of His wisdom; having been endowed with knowledge, they find pleasure in devotion to Him and desire only his grace. The Lord of blue throat, the blue throat being a mark of his graceful concern to the creatures whose extinction was imminent when the hālāhala poison spread, extends his grace to the one who has obtained the true knowledge and grants him supreme Bliss.

Sa khalu hṛdayagataḥ param Brahma Parameśvaraḥ Paramamangalasvarūpaḥ Umāpatiḥ Paramātmā . . . svārpitasakalakarmaphalam svāyattacittam svajñānāmṛtaparipūrṇam nirastasamastakāmyaphala vivekādisampannam svabhaktimātraikaniratam svaprasādā-

kāṅkshiṇaṁ vidyāvantam sādhakam avalokya śarīraparityāgasamaye tadviṣayasampannaprasādaḥ tasmin samsāramalakalankāpakarṣiṇīm anugrahadṛṣṭim nidadhāti / Tadanugrahaviśeṣeṇāsau vigalitasāmsārikamalaḥ prakāṣātmadyotitamūrdhanyanāḍyā nirgatya arcirādinā tadīyam paraṁ padaṁ aprākṛtam niratiśayānandasvabhāvam prāpya tadākāro bhūtvā nityaniratiśayānandasvarūpaḥ bhavati/

—Śrīkaṇṭha Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, IV.2.16.

Reference is made here only incidentally to the bhakti which together with Niṣkāma karma enable a person to gain the clarity of understanding and strength of mind necessary for the perception of the highest truth.

According to *Śaiva Siddhānta,* God, soul and matter are the three eternal padārthas or entities which constitute reality. 'God is the One ; the second part of him is his sweet grace' says Tirumūlar. The same is called 'Arul śakti'. It is Grace made dynamic to save the soul. The souls are many. It is a spiritual being endowed with intelligence and knowledge of some sort certainly of a far limited kind when compared to the Supreme God. It is the love that Śiva bears for the soul that makes him bring the world into being.

According to the Siddhāntin if the chain of births is to be snapped jñāna mārga, is the only way; for as ignorance has been the cause of delusion and misery so it is only knowledge that can bring about enlightenment and happiness.'முத்திக்கு வித்து முதல்வன் தன் ஞானமே' says Thirumūlar. Even meditation cannot take the place of Jñāna for meditation is possible only with the help of mind and other senses which being of this world cannot take one beyond the material world.

This path consists of three stages, pāśajñāna, paśu jñāna and patijñāna. The soul in order to reject the world that is transient and nonspiritual has to learn the nature of the world, a product of tattvas arising from māyā, the Primal Nature.

Failing to find its satisfaction in the world full of imperfections and a source of misery, the soul through paśu jñāna or knowledge of the soul becomes aware of the grace of God within it. With God on the one side and the soul on the other and feeling the influence of both, the soul perceives that the spiritual pursuit is satisfying for it. Having experienced both the world and Śivaśakti, the soul chooses the latter. The bhaktas in the initial stage may be said to possess this paśujñāna.

As the soul progresses on its onward journey on the spiritual path, a new stage is reached. It has now a new goal to reach viz. Śiva and has to take a new path and wield a new instrument. Advancing as it does towards the spiritual goal, the soul finds the material tattvas more a hindrance than a help. Śivaśakti as Śivajñāna helps the soul to learn about Pati and it is called Patijñāna. As the eye stands between the soul and the object and helps in the perception of an object, so divine grace standing between God and the soul enables one to know the other and finally for the soul to get into communion with Śiva as a river that enters the ocean takes the salinity of the ocean.

Dehapāte cidānandam Śivaikarasatām vrajet/
Na punar bhedam āyāti Sarit toyam ivāmbudhau//

--Rauravāgama.

To the soul ready for Patijñāna Śiva appears in the form of a Guru. Only to souls prepared to receive him does Śiva appear, even as the Sun opens only those lotuses that are ready to bloom.

The soul inspired by the highest goal of communion with God passes gradually from one stage of spiritual enlightenment to another. Starting from the first rung of the ladder, as the servant of God, the soul practices *caryā,* consisting in external duties such as cleaning and lighting God's temples, adorning image with garlands, praising God and attending to the needs of devotees. For these deeds the soul is rewarded with Śāloka or dwelling in the region of God.

From being a servant, the soul in the *kriyā* stage becomes a son and renders more intimate service than before, such as invoking God's presence, serving him with love and praise and other acts of service like Śivapūjā, besides attending to the burning of incense, collecting flowers etc. The reward for service of this type is sāmīpya or dwelling near God.

In the next stage of yoga the *Sakha Mārga* the soul becomes the friend of God and thus is nearer God. Withdrawing its senses from the material objects, it concentrates on the contemplation of Śiva. This is rewarded by Sārūpya, which is to have the same form as Śiva but not the essence. The above three goals of caryā kriyā and yoga lead only to transistory stations of Sāloka, sāmīpya and Sārūpya; these rewards being transient the soul after experiencing them has to return to earth. The soul has to progress further in the jñāna mārga to reach the final goal of *Sāyujya* from which there is no return.

Jñānotpattinimittam tu kriyācaryāḥ prakīrtitāḥ'

—Devīkālottarāgama.

Sāyujya is a state of union of God and soul, a mysterious union of each with the other without prejudice to the existence or nature of either, so that God and soul exist with their respective attributes, the former as the source of bliss and the latter as the recipient of the same.

This state is attained only by jñānapūjā which consists in the words of 'Sivajñāna Siddhiyār'—

'ஞானநூல் தனை ஓதல், ஓதுவித்தல், நற்பொருளைக் கேட்பித்தல் தான் கேட்டல், நன்று ஈனமிலாப் பொருளதனைச் சிந்தித்தல் ஐந்தும் இறைவனடி அடைவிக்கு மெழின் ஞானபூசை' (2.23)

Karma or action, tapas or penance, japa or chanting, dhyāna or meditation are only preliminary steps in the ascending order which confer only transitory stations. Devotional acts like worship of God or praising his glory and performing rituals with the aid of consecrated fire fall under the category of the second out of the four paths, viz., kriyā mārga which confers only sāmīpya. So according to the Śaiva Siddhāntins jñāna is the ultimate means of liberation and bhakti is only a handmaid of jñāna. 'ஞானப் பெருமையுடையார் சிவனைப் பெறுவர்' says Arulnandi Deva.

The aim of Rāmānuja was to *harmonise* Absolutism with personal Theism, to reconcile reason and faith. In Ramānuja the Bhakti movement found a competent philosophical exponent. As J. S. M. Hooper observes: 'From Rāmānujācārya, as from a reservoir into which earlier streams had poured, the many subsequent bhakti movements branch out again, some with more of emotions some with less; but all alike in accepting as substantially true his theory of the relation between God and man and the Universe'. (Hymns of the Ālvārs P. 6). The Ālvārs provided the soil out of which naturally sprang Rāmānuja's teaching. Thiruvarangattu Amudanār refers to this in his இராமானுஜ நூற்றந்தாதி—

எய்தற்கரிய மறைகளை ஆயிரம் இன்தமிழால்
செய்தற்குலகில் வரும் சடகோபனைச் சிந்தையுள்ளே
பெய்தற்கிசையும் பெரியவர் சீரை உயிர்களெல்லாம்
உய்தற்குதவும் இராமானுசன் எம் உறுதுணையே. (18)

According to Rāmānuja, the Absolute or Brahman or God is an Organic whole containing within itself individual souls and mat-

ter as inseparable parts. The Brahman, the abode of all auspicious qualities is the controller of the souls and the world.

Rāmānuja is a staunch advocate of jñānakarmasamuccayavēda in explaining the means of liberation. He recognises the value of Karma, jñāna and bhakti, the traditionally recognised means of liberation and adds to it 'Prapatti' or way of self-surrender to God.

Commenting on the Gītāvākya, 'Yajñadānatapaḥ karma na tyājyam kāryameva tat', Rāmānuja observes, 'sādhaka should never abandon the daily and obligatory duties prescribed in the 'karmakāṇda'. They should be performed till he breathes his last (Gītā Bhāsya 18-5). An action done by one realising that he is only an instrument of God leaving the fruits of his actions to God is not bound by his action.

cf. yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam

Bh. Gītā. IX. 27.

Karmas are transformed into Kainkarya, an awareness that one is a humble servant of God, when the egoism is replaced by the Will of God. Duty then becomes Devotion to God.

When the aspirant gets the real knowledge that he is only an 'aṇu' in relation to God who is 'Vibhu' his heart is filled with love towards him. This is the starting point of 'Bhakti yoga'. He defines 'bhakti' as the 'loving steady remembrance of God which is unbroken like a stream of oil 'Dhruvānusmṛtireva bhaktiśabdenābhidhīyate', says he in his Brahmasūtra bhāsya. He distinguishes the lower from the higher bhakti. The lower is Upāsanā or meditation and the higher is intuitive knowledge. The means to obtain the lower type of 'bhakti' are according to Rāmānuja, (1) Viveka (purification of the body by sāttvic food), (2) Abhyāsa (continuous practice of the presence of the indwelling self), (3) Vimoka (freeness of mind), (4) Kriyā (works), (5) Kalyāṇa (virtuous conduct), (6)anavasāda (freedom from dejection) and (7) anuddharṣa (absence of exultation). This 'Parabhakti makes the aspirant inquisitive about Godhead and the supreme knowledge acquired by him about God, Parajñāna culminates in 'Paramabhakti' the higher bhakti which according to him is a 'jñāna viśeṣa' a kind of intuitive knowledge about Bhagavān being the source and satisfaction of life which seeks to ignore everything that is not done for the sake of God. Brahman, the object of contemplation being very lovely, the very act of contemplation is very sweet.

'Paramapuruṣaḥ svayam anavadhikātiśayasukhaḥ san parasyāpi sukham bhavati.'

The Lord accepts the flower of devotion more than any material offering and it is the eightfold flower of non-violence, control of senses, kindness to all living creatures, patience, knowledge, penance, meditation and truthfulness that he is fond of.

Bhakti is for the sake of bhakti and has its fruition in absolute self-surrender to Bhagavān as the 'upāya' or means and the 'upeya' or the end. When bhakti ceases to have for its goal material prosperity or even 'kaivalya' but turns into love for love's sake then the 'bhakta' becomes the 'paramaikāntin'.

According to Rāmānuja, jñāna is inspired by bhakti and bhakti is illumined by jñāna and the two together constitute the bhaktirūpāpannajñāna.

He thus gives to 'bhakti' what is purely an emotion, a colour of 'dhyāna' (meditation) and 'jñāna' (knowledge). Rāmānuja refers to deep meditation, a state in which the devotee sees God face to face as it were. This is based on the Upaniṣadic passages—

Ātmā vā are nididhyāsitavyaḥ

(Br. Up. 2.4.5.).

Tatas tu tam paśyate niṣkalam dhyāyamānaḥ

(Kaṭha. Up. 3.1.8.).

Peyālvār, said to have been born in Mylapore, a God-intoxicated devotee gives expression to his knowledge vision of the Divine pair Nārāyaṇa and Śrī in one. He visualised God as with His infinite śakti, the redemptive Grace of God, to one who has verily entered into him. He exclaims—

திருக்கண்டேன் பொன்மேனி கண்டேன், திகழும்
அருக்கன் அணிநிறமும் கண்டேன்—செருக்கிளரும்
பொன்னாழி கண்டேன், புரிசங்கம் கைக் கண்டேன்
என்னாழி வண்ணன் பால் இன்று.

—மூன்றும் திருவந்தாதி, 1.

master. In the 'Śaraṇāgati gadya' he says—

Rāmānuja liked the *dāsya bhakti*, the love of a servant to his

Daivīm guṇamayīm māyām dāsabhūtam śaraṇāgatośmi tavāsmi dāsaḥ iti vaktāram mām tāraya.

Thirumazhisai Ālvār considers himself a servant of Keśava, the consort of Lakṣmī and the very love—

அன்பாவாய் ஆரமுதமாவாய், அடியேனுக்கு
இன்பாவாய் எல்லாமும் நீயாவாய்—பொன்பாவை கேள்வா
கிளரொளி என் கேசவனே, கேடின்றி
ஆள்வாய்க்கு அடியேன் நான் ஆள். (59)

Rāmānuja and other Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins and even the Śaiva Siddhāntins would not tolerate the loss of individuality of the soul even in the state of liberation or sāyujya. If the individuality is lost, who will enjoy the bliss of liberation? Bhakti has its own joy; there is no higher happiness than to be a bhakta. It is necessary for devotion that the devotee should be separate from God and enjoy his companionship. Mukti without divine life is of no consequence to a bhakta.

Thondaradippodi Ālvār had no preference for the bhogas in Indraloka when he could enjoy the higher bliss in reciting the names of Acyuta and in drinking his beauty.

பச்சைமாமலைபோல் மேனி பவளவாய் கமலச்செங்கண்
அச்சுதா, அமரர் ஏறே, ஆயர்தம் கொழுந்தே என்னும்
இச்சுவை தவிரயான் போய் இந்திரலோகமாளும்
அச்சுவை பெறினும் வேண்டேன் அரங்கமா நகருளானே.

(திருமாலை, 2)

Vedānta Deśika's preference of Varada-bhakti in this life to the bliss of Vaikuṇṭha that is beyond is a typical Vaishṇavite experience.

Mokṣa according to Viśiṣṭādvaita cannot be attained by mere human efforts; the *grace of God* is indispensable. This is recognised by the Śaiva Siddhāntins as well, Vedānta Deśika and his followers hold that God grants his grace only to him who had qualified for that by the practice of karma, jñāna and bhakti absolutely surrendering himself to His will. Pillai Lokācārya and his followers hold that prapatti or self-surrender to God is all that is necessary for one who seeks liberation. 'Prapatti' is exemplified in the 'Śaraṇāgati' of Nammālvār and Yāmunācārya.

Yāmunācārya says in Stotraratnam (V. 21).

Na dharmaniṣṭhośmi na cātmavedī
Na bhaktimān tvaccaraṇāravinde/
Akiñcano'nanyagatiḥ Śaraṇya,
Tvatpādamūlam śaraṇam prapadye//

'I do not faithfully observe the dharmas nor am I possessed of self-knowledge; I am not a devotee; I am not a person of any consequence; I have no other source of refuge, O Redeemer, I seek refuge at your lotus like feet.'

Piḷḷailokācārya expounds the nature of 'puruṣakāra' and 'prapatti". It denies the value of 'Bhakti yoga' disciplined by karma and jñāna, as the effort involved in the process is not commensurate with the spiritual gain and even 'prapatti' has no value if it is practised as a means to 'mukti'. The God grants him grace. Even to understand him his grace is needed.

As Saint Thirunāvukkarasu observes in--

விஞ விடைத் திருத்தாண்டகம்,

அப்படியும் அந்நிறமும் அவ்வண்ணமும் அவனருளே கண்ணுகக் காணின் அல்லால்,

இப்படியன் இந்நிறத்தன் இவ்வண்ணத்தன் இவனிறைவன் என்றெழுதிக் காட்டொணுதே (10)

The Nirhetuka karma, the spontaneous grace of Nārāyana for the sinner and the afflicted is treated in several episodes in the Bhāgavata. *Tulsi Dās,* the saintly composer who has enriched the spiritual literature in Hindi by his poetical imagination, moral and devotional fervour and philosophical insight has this to say on *Divine grace*.

'This have I heard, O Hari, that thou art the Redeemer of sinners. Sinner am I, and thou the redeemer of such sinners. How, beautiful this bond that bind us together. The Śāstras proclaim that the Lord hath redeemed Ajamila and Gaṇikā and Gajendra in distress, and countless others by his grace, have been uplifted. Utter even the name of the Lord, unconscisous of that act from hell to heaven shalt thou be quick uplifted.'

Saint *Māṇikkavācakar* refers to the Divine grace which transformed him, a man of no learning, into a Godly soul by showing him the path of devotion.

முத்திநெறி அறியாத மூர்க்கரொடு முயல்வேனைப்
பத்திநெறி அறிவித்துப் பழவினைகள் பாறும் வண்ணம்
சித்தமலம் அறுவித்துச் சிவமாக்கி எனையாண்ட
அத்தன் எனக்கருளியவாறுர் பெறுவார் அச்சோவே.

—அச்சோப்பதிகம், 1.

The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* says, 'The Supreme God cannot be gained by a study of the Vedas nor by intelligence nor by vast learning. He

whom the God chooses by Him alone can God be gained. To him alone He reveals himself.'

'Nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ
No medhayā na bahunā śrutena
Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ
Tasyaiṣa ātmā vṛṇute tanūm svām. II.23.

If it is a case of the chosen few attaining liberation due to his grace it does not mean that God is partial. Bhagavān, declares in Gītā—

Samo'ham sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ/
Ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham // IX.29.

'I am the same to all beings; there is none hateful to me nor dear. They who worship me with devotion, they are in me and I also in them.'

Commenting on this Nīlakaṇṭha writes: "As the fire though it is devoid of attractions and feelings, still removes the sensation of cold, only of those who are close by and not of those who keep at a distance, so, Bhagavān, equal to all removes the bondage only of those who seek his refuge and not of others. Therefore aversion and attraction do not belong to him."

The *Doctrine of Grace* is accepted by all schools of Vedānta in which is included the Śaiva Siddhānta as well. The grace of God cannot be arbitrary even though God is all powerful and all merciful. So his grace or Anugraha śakti which finally brings about salvation is extended to different individuals strictly according to their own karmas. Evidently Brahman cannot arbitrarily exhaust all the karmas of the different individuals to enable them to be free all at once. *Śankara* gives a beautiful illustration. Take the clouds. Clouds shower rain which falls on the several seeds sown by the farmer in his field. Yet when the seeds sprout forth, the plants are found to be of various species. What is the reason for this difference? Surely the clouds impartially showered the same quantity of rain on all the seeds. The only explanation is that the seeds of those plants differ among themselves and so the initial difference in the seeds is responsible for the difference in the plants. The cloud is the 'general cause' whereas the inherent potency in the seeds is the 'special cause' that determines the difference. God like the cloud showers

his grace impartially but the jīvas on account of the difference in their karma suffer or enjoy in this world. *Śrīkaṇṭha* explains the same in another way. Parameśvara emits his supreme mercy always and for all as is his nature like the all luminary Sun which emits its rays always and for all. Although the Sun shines for all equally, yet only those lotuses that are mature open up their petals and bloom forth and not those that are immature. Similarly only those who are 'pakvamalas' who are fit to be free according to their own spiritual strivings that are freed finally through his supreme grace. Others have to bide their time.

After the Mahābhārata war Rsi Uddanka met Lord Kṛṣṇa and asked him why he allowed the destruction of the Kauravas by taking sides with the Pāṇḍavas while as God he should treat both alike. Lord replied how with enormous patience he bore up against the sins of the Kauravas and tried all means to secure peace but the Kauravas persisted in their infernal determination not to let live the Pāṇḍavas with honour. Uddanka asked why he as Universal Ruler and Omnipotent God could not so contrive the will of the Kauravas as to be well-disposed and thus averted war and destruction. Lord Kṛṣṇa replied 'But they have their free will. I cannot coerce it, but must wait till of its own free choice a prediliction for me evolves from it.

According to *Madhva* there are three eternal entities God, individual souls and world, the first alone being independent reality and the others dependent on him. Liberation consists in the knowledge on the part of the soul of its own finitude and dependence on Him and the dawn of Divine grace on the part of the Lord. Though Nescience, Karma, prakṛti etc. are the cause of bondage it is Divine Will that is ultimately responsible for it. It is Divine grace which is ultimately responsible for liberation from bondage. Though Madhva recognises the value of knowledge, disinterested action and devotion as the means of liberation he lays great store by devotion. According to Madhva, *Bhakti* is the attachment of the heart towards him preceded by a full knowledge and belief that He is the best and highest (M.Bh.Br.UP. III.1.8). It is the firm and unshakable love for God, which rises above all other bonds of love and affection based on right knowledge and conviction of His great majesty'.

Māhātymyajñānapūrvas tu sudṛḍhas sarvato'dhikah/
Sneho bhaktiriti proktas tayā muktir na cānyathā //

A soul can realise its salvation only when it has actualised the full potentialities of bhakti inherent in it. Even in the highest state

of liberation, viz., sāyujya, the soul does not lose its individuality but enjoys only fellowship with God. Bhakti has got its own pleasure and a bhakta does not want liberation if it is devoid of the bliss of being a devotee even at that stage. It is said in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that as the yogic siddhis do not tempt a true yogi, the highest class of souls are not tempted by the prospects of sāloka and other forms of mokṣa (III.29.13).

Sālokasārṣṭisāmīpyasārūpyaikatvamapyuta /
Dīyamānam na gṛhṇanti vinā matsevanam janāh//

This is Ekānta bhakti or primary devotion. Jayatīrtha mentions three stages of bhakti. They are (1) *lower bhakti* from which sādhaka has to start. Then he secures the metaphysical knowledge about the Infinitude of God and finitude of souls. This leads him on to the second stage of bhakti called *'Pakvabhakti'* when the devotee's heart melts. This is continued thereafter and when he attains the intuitive knowledge he reaches the third and highest stage of bhakti called '*Paripakva*' bhakti. Then comes 'mukti and thereby 'bhakti' again which is of the essence of bliss and an end in itself.

Bhaktyā jñānam tato bhaktiḥ tato dṛṣtis tataśca sā /
Tato muktis tato bhaktiḥ saiva syāt sukharūpiṇī //
—Anuvyākhyā.

Like Rāmānuja, Madhva also undervalues the ideal of mokṣa and regards 'bhakti' as the highest ideal.

The system of *Nimbārka* is known as Svābhāvikabhedābhedavāda which emphasises equally the difference and non-difference between Brahman on the one hand and the souls and the world on the other as between the waves and the ocean. According to him there are five means of attainment of liberation. They are (1) karma or disinterested performance of action (2) Vidyā or true knowledge about the difference and nondifference between Īsvara, Jīva and Jagat. This Vidyā destroys 'karma' and 'Avidyā', (3) Upāsanā or meditation on the lines laid down by Patañjali, (4) Prapatti or complete self-surrender to God, the most effective means and (5) Gurūpasatti or self-surrender to the spiritual preceptor, an intermediary between the soul and God. According to the Vaiṣṇava thinkers the upper three castes can adopt any of the above means whereas the fourth caste can follow the last two.

Bhakti or devotion accompanies each of the five means. It is not a type of meditation as Rāmānuja took it but a kind of love

towards God. The liberated continues to be a bhakta, not out of awe or reverence but out of fulness of love towards the Supreme Rādhā-kṛṣṇa.

Vallabha heads the school of Śuddhādvaita the non-dualism that is pure being devoid of Māyā. To him Lord Kṛṣṇa is the highest reality and Śrīmad Bhāgavata, the greatest authority on Religion. According to Vallabha the souls have come out of Brahman like sparks from blazing fire and are real agents and enjoyers of action.

There are three grades of souls (1) Pravāhī, those who wallow in this mundane world without any thought of liberation. (2) Maryādā, who study the scriptures and follow the jñāna mārga (3) Puṣṭi the chosen souls of the Lord who worship him out of boundless love for him.

The liberation attained by human efforts is by 'maryādā mārga' where the joy of worshipping the Lord is absent, while liberation obtained by God's grace is *Puṣṭimokṣa* where there is an overflow of love.

Vallabha recognises niṣkāma karma, jñāna and yoga the conventional means of mokṣa but considers bhakti and prapatti as the only safe means for liberation. The love of Gopis to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is held as the highest ideal of love. In his 'Bhaktivardhanī' he mentions seven stages of bhakti in the ascending order. They are bhāva, prema, praṇaya, sneha, rāga, anurāga and vyasana. In the final stage he completely dedicates himself to the Lord.

According to Vallabha there are two main kinds of bhakti (1) maryādābhakti which originates after studying the scriptures and realising the greatness of Rādhākṛṣṇa. This corresponds to the Vaidhī bhakti of the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism (2) Puṣṭi Bhakti which springs out of infinite love towards him, aided by Divine grace. This corresponds to the Rāgātmikā bhakti of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism. The first is the result of the nine forms of devotion mentioned in the Bhāgavata, the second is an end in itself. The conception of puṣṭi is the special feature of Vallabha.

According to him the soul retains its individuality in the state of liberation, the highest state of which is the soul's participation in Rāsa-līlā in Goloka, beyond Vaikuṇṭha.

According to *Caitanya* The Absolute or Lord Kṛṣṇa, Prakṛti, Soul, Time and Karma are the five roads. Though the Absolute is

One it has three aspects according to the capacity of realisation of a devotee. They are Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa the fullest embodiment of svarūpaśakti and Rasa. The relation between the categories is one of 'acintyabhedābheda' or incomprehensible difference cum non-difference as in the case of heat and fire. The bondage is due to the soul forgetting the Lord and liberation consists in seeing the Lord. The highest Puruṣārtha is Prema, the fifth Puruṣārtha over and above the four. In that state of love in liberation, which is higher than even sāyujya mukti, the soul no longer remains a part of the jīvaśakti of the Lord but becomes part of his svarūpa śakti and remains an attendant on him enjoying the Ānanda of devotion only because the beauty of the Lord compels him to do so.

Vidyā, i.e., knowledge preceded by devotion is the safe and self-sufficient means of liberation though karma and yoga attended by devotion are also accepted as means. According to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* there are five stages of devotion. (1) Śanta where the devotee tries to fix his mind calmly on, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, (2) 'Dāsya' where he realises that he is the eternal servant of the Lord, (3) 'Sakhya' where he feels himself to be intimate with the Lord, (4) 'Vātsalya' where he loves the Lord as a mother does her child and (5) 'Mādhurya' the highest stage where the relationship is one like that between a beloved and her lover.

Rupagosvāmi, an exponent of Caitanya school in his 'Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu' speaks about two types of bhakti (1) Sāmānya bhakti which is of the lower type motivated by worldly goods and (2) uttama bhakti which is the harmonious pursuit of Kṛṣna free from all other desires and unconditioned by jñāna and karma. It has three forms (1) Sādhana bhakti, (2) Bhāva bhakti and (3) Prema bhakti.

(1) *Sādhana bhakti* is that form of devotion in which the senses and not inward emotion is involved. Again Sādhana bhakti has two divisions (1) Vaidhī bhakti based upon scriptural injunctions and (2) Rāgātmikā bhakti emanating from a sort of sweet envy at the mādhurya bhāva exhibited by the people of Vraja towards Gopālakṛṣṇa. When devotion arises from inward emotion of love towards the Lord, it is called (2)bhāva bhakti. When this gets intensified and takes the form of Rasa it is Prema bhakti, the summum bonum of human existence. We thus find that several of the Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins regard 'bhakti' as an end in itself assigning to mokṣa only a secondary place.

Śrī Caitanya prays I have no desire for wealth, relatives, beautiful woman or even the delightful Muse. O Lord of the Universe, I pray that I be favoured with sincere devotion in birth after birth.

Na dhanam na janam na sundarīm kavitām vā jagadīśa kāmaye/
Mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktirahetukī tvayi//

யாமிரப்பவை பொன்னும் பொருளும் போகமும் அல்ல
நின்பால் அன்பும் அருளும்.... (பரிபாடல்)

May we strive towards this ideal of Devotion to the Supreme Godhead by whatever name or form we adore him.

P. Thirugnanasambandhan.